



Tammy Sewell, Megan Overgaard, Susan Dransfield (honorable mention) and Annette Smith were recognized with Governor's Industry Awards for Notable Teaching in Science (GIANTS) on April 14.

## Science teachers honored at annual GIANTS event

by Marilyn Whitney

Gov. C. L. "Butch" Otter presented three Idaho teachers with this year's Governor's Industry Award for Notable Teaching in Science (GIANTS) at a ceremony April 14 at the Discovery Center of Idaho in Boise .

Weiser High School teacher Megan Overgaard, Annette Smith of Rocky Mountain Middle School ( Idaho Falls ) and West Park Elementary School ( Moscow ) teacher Tammy Sewell were awarded \$2,000 each as part of their GIANTS recognition. Honorable mention awards were presented to three teachers: Lane Durtschi of Carey School , Mike Brown with Teton Middle School (Driggs) and Susan Dransfield of Mary McPherson Elementary School ( Meridian ).

The GIANTS program was initiated in 2001 to recognize outstanding science teachers at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Teachers are nominated by their students, who provide letters of support for nominees. In addition to the \$2,000 cash award, winning teachers receive a lifetime membership to the Discover Center of Idaho and a gift certificate for science materials or equipment, while the nominating student council receives \$500. Honorable mentions at each level receive \$500, and their student councils are awarded \$100.

Idaho National Laboratory was a founding member of the GIANTS industry roundtable. Sponsoring partners include Micron Technology, URS-Washington Division, Idaho Power and Hewlett-Packard, with support from the Idaho Department of Commerce's Office of Science and Technology, the State Department of Education, the State Board of Education and the Discovery Center of Idaho.

As he congratulated the 2008 winners, the governor was joined by First Lady Lori Otter and Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna. Otter remarked that, "Annette, Megan and Tammy serve as a model of how educators can work with industry to enhance science and technology education. More than ever, we need teachers who can inspire students to lives spent in discovery, learning and achievement. Those teachers who excel deserve our support and recognition."

Sewell, the elementary school winner, incorporates a variety of special programs into her classroom to enhance science instruction, including a forensic science unit, video production projects, robotics, a skyscraper construction challenge and field trips to study ecosystems. Sewell's students describe her classes as "challenging and interesting, exciting and amazing -- and anything but boring -- sometimes even scary!"

Smith, this year's middle-school winner, has been an educator for 21 years, teaching math, life science and physical science. Speeding cars in the hallways, laser-light shows, kinetic ice-cream experiences, multiple chemistry reaction and the singing of the Element Song are just a few of the adventures that take place in Smith's classes. In their nomination letter, her students said, "Science labs were some of our favorite days in Mrs. Smith's science class. She let us wear lab coats and always made the labs a learning experience."

Overgaard, the high school awardee, has been teaching biology and anatomy/physiology for 10 years. In the nomination letter, Trenna Erhard, student council president, wrote, "Mrs. Overgaard challenges us to incorporate what we learn into real-world experiences, and she leads by example. It's easy for students to relate to what Mrs. O teaches in the classroom because her influence doesn't end when the bell rings at 3:30. Mrs. O has made connections throughout Weiser to help further her students' education with hands-on experiences. As students, we feel blessed to have the opportunity to be in her classroom."

Winners and their guests were treated to a luncheon following the awards ceremony. They were joined by representatives from the industry sponsors of the awards. Sponsors praised the efforts of the winning teachers to link industry and the economic future of Idaho to the classroom through the enhancement of science and technology education.

